

about a safety net. There is no safety net anymore. It has been eradicated in the last 4 years. Section 8 tenants in the major cities of America are going to really suffer. It is too bad. It is too bad that the poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting richer, the middle class is becoming smaller and smaller. That is what this administration has done to America.

I yield the floor, and any time I have left in morning business, I yield back.

#### LOBBYING ABOUT MEDICARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I felt compelled to come to the Senate floor today to respond to something I read today that was in the newspaper, the Hill, that relates to another effort to confuse people about what happened with the Medicare prescription drug bill, the Medicare cards that I hate to even call discount cards because they are not discounts. In fact, we are now seeing an effort to pay people to reach out and say something nice about the Medicare prescription drug bill and to get seniors to do it. Let me read to you some of this article.

A Republican lobbying firm is offering healthcare consultants almost \$4,000 each to find senior citizens who are willing to speak out in favor of the Medicare drug discount card and write letters to Congress thanking members for saving them money on pharmaceuticals.

Obviously, it is difficult to find people to do that, so now they are paying people to go out in the form of headhunters, if you will, to find people who are willing to say something nice about the new Medicare prescription drug bill.

The DCI Group, a Washington, DC-based lobbying shop that advertises to potential clients that it can treat "corporate issues like campaigns," is offering healthcare consultants \$3,750 plus expenses over six weeks [between now and the election] to generate positive news stories about the drug card and offer support to Congress for voting for the Medicare drug law . . .

A recent e-mail sent from the DCI Group's Starlee Rhoades to healthcare consultants says that the campaign will run from September 15 to October 31 and that the client is RetireSafe, which has sponsored the hiring of healthcare consultants . . . to go out and say good things about the Medicare prescription drug bill.

The DCI Group represents the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America—PhRMA.

That is not surprising.

Tony Feather, who helped found the DCI Group, has close ties to President Bush's top political adviser, Karl Rove.

Also not a surprise.

The DCI Group e-mail to healthcare consultants, obtained by The Hill, stipulates a number of "minimum deliverables" that come with the job of touting the drug card.

Or duties, if you will.

The e-mail says that RetireSafe wants seniors, families of seniors and healthcare community leaders "to send letters to their congressmen and senators thanking them for supporting the Medicare benefit, or asking

for that support in the future." [And by the way] "We have help available to write letters if the signer is not comfortable drafting the letter entirely on their own."

For \$3,750 plus expenses, health care officials must be available as an expert source of information to the media and that community and personally stop by the offices of their Congressman and Senators and thank them.

This is also very important as part of the deliverability. They must bring at least one senior or health care community leader to stand up at a townhall meeting and thank the lawmaker. I look forward to that.

The DCI group also asked the health care consultant to speak out on their own in support of the drug card.

Finally, every Wednesday from now until the 31st they are expected to send a report to the DCI that answers many questions, including how many events they attended. Did you speak in favor of the card and benefit? How many health care leaders did you ask to stop by the office of their Congressman or Senators? And how many actually did.

Then it says you will be responsible for acting as a local spokesperson at community events and media to get health care professionals' opinions, which goes a long way in making the story seem credible to the general public.

Reached yesterday, the lady involved initially denied she was involved in this campaign. But when told that her e-mail had been distributed widely, she said, "I can't talk about it."

I feel compelled to talk about this and to take a moment and say that \$3,750 will buy a lot of Medicare for seniors. In fact, I am tempted to actually encourage seniors in my State and around the country to offer to say something nice between now and the election because they can buy a lot of medicine with this. That would be a better way to put it if, in fact, we were giving it directly to seniors.

The truth is, this was a good bill. If the discount cards were really a discount, if the Medicare prescription drug bill was really good for seniors, you would not have to pay consultants \$3,750 plus expenses for 6 weeks. And the truth is, it doesn't matter how much you pay. Seniors know. They are the ones who have to write the checks. They are the ones who have to go to the counter every day and every month to look at what the bill is and decide if they walk away with their medicine or leave it there at the counter. They are the ones who decide whether they take them every other day, cut them in half, share them with their spouse, maybe don't get the medicine, pick it up today or get their medicine another day.

This is real for people. No matter how many consultants are paid \$3,750 plus expenses, people know. It is unfortunate that there are those who underestimate the intelligence of older people in our country, their families, or the disabled. They know.

I hear stories every day of people who have gone to the Web site for Medicare and tried to wade through all of the cards—up to 70-some different cards—to figure out how to get some kind of discount. Then they look at prices continuing to go up.

I had a lady the other day tell me she bought the card, paid \$25, and a couple of weeks later the medicine she was taking no longer had the discount, and she didn't get her money back.

People know. That is the great thing about our country. It doesn't matter what you have or how much you spend. People know whether they are better off. People know what is really happening.

We need to get about the business of getting this Medicare prescription drug bill right. We need to go back and do it over again, and do it right. Pharmacists need to have the ability of doing business with pharmacists in Canada who can really cut prices in half. Then we don't have to pay consultants \$3,750 plus expenses to go find the senior citizen who would say something nice about a Medicare bill. People would say it because it would be true and it would be real.

But in the meantime, I say to folks who are today trying to figure out who to pay for their medicine, you might want to try offering, during the next 6 weeks, to say something nice about the Medicare bill for \$3,750 plus expenses. I know it would buy my mom a lot of medicine. It would buy a lot of folks a lot of medicine, and it would be a better way to spend it than have more lobbyists trying to tell folks something that is not true.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remainder of the morning business time be reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### NOMINATION OF PORTER J. GOSS TO BE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to executive session to begin consideration of Calendar No. 815, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of PORTER J. GOSS, of Florida, to be Director of Central Intelligence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are 6 hours of debate on the nomination equally divided between the chairman and vice